President ATWATER'S

ELECTION

SERMON.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY

ISAAC TICHENOR, Esq. GOVERNOUR,

THE HONORABLE THE

COUNCIL

AND

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OF THE

STATE OF VERMONT,

AT

BURLINGTON,

ON THE DAY OF THE

ANNIVERSARY ELECTION,

October 14, 1802.

BY JEREMIAH ATWATER,

PRESIDENT OF MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE.

THE natural place of Virtue is near to Liberty; but it is not nearer to extreme liberty than to servitude.

MONTESQUIEU.

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IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, OCTOBER 15, 1802.

RESOLVED, That a committee of three Members be appointed to wait upon the Reverend Mr. ATWATER, return him the thanks of the Houſe, for his Election Sermon, and requeſt a copy thereof for the preſs.

Members choſen—Mr. Lyon, Mr. Leland, Mr. Niles.

Atteſt.

JAMES ELLIOT, Clerk.

A

SERMON, &c.

1st PETER—II Chap. 16th Verse.

AS free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness.

CALLED to ſpeak before this reſpectable Aſſembly, I have need of much of the candor, and muſt beg the patient indulgence of my audience, on the preſent occaſion.

THE time has been, when the feelings of all have been powerfully intereſted in the events, which have happened on the theatre of Europe. But the European world is now at peace, and our ſympathy with foreign governments, it is to be hoped, is leſſened. The affairs which now occupy our minds, are the concerns of our own country, and its government. What happens in all free countries, has happened here, that differences of opinion have ariſen. What lies at the bottom of theſe differences, is, I apprehend, difference of views, relative to the nature and end of government itſelf. To entertain right

ideas on this point will, by all, be judged of the higheſt importance. Errors here, cannot fail to produce thoſe evils which ever attend error. It is deſirable, not only that we ſhould know the true end of government; but that we ſhould underſtand the foundation of our own free, republican ſyſtem, that we may unite in our endeavours, to give to it permanency, and guard againſt the evils, which threaten its overthrow. Whether in treating on a ſubject of this ſort, in times like theſe, I may flatter myſelf with the idea of eſcaping cenſure, or not, ſtill, this may, with truth, be ſaid, that to attempt to irritate and add fuel to the flame of party, would be improper, and incompatible with the friendly feelings, with which we ought to aſſemble on this anniverſary.

In the chapter containing the text, the apoſtle directed thoſe to whom he wrote, how to conduct in the civil relation. He ſuppoſes that there may be ſuch a thing, as an abuſe of liberty, and warns them to guard againſt it. What I now propoſe, is, to conſider the reſtraint which the idea of government always ſuppoſes, and the nature of this reſtraint in a republican government; the connexion of ſuch a ſyſtem in our own country, with the peculiar ſtate of ſociety, and the moral principles and habits of the people; and the neceſſity and the means of preſerv-

ing them. The apoſtle, in the context, informs us, that rulers are appointed for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of thoſe who do well. Government may then, I conceive, be conſidered, as having its origin, primarily, in the vices of man. If all men were virtuous, there would be little need of it. But ſuch is man's nature, ſo prone is he to invade the rights of others, that he needs reſtraint: The ſelfiſh paſſions need curbing and regulating. The neceſſity of government ariſes from the neceſſity of ſuch reſtraint. This is a very obvious truth: But at the ſame time, apt to be overlooked in an age, when multitudes, feeling that reſtraints have, in many inſtances, been unneceſſarily impoſed, in the paroxyſm of paſſion ſeem diſpoſed to throw off all reſtraint. To exclaim againſt reſtraint, and to extol unbounded liberty, has ever been a popular theme. The man who can flatter reſtleſſneſs with change; poverty with an equalization of ſtation and property; vice with the indulgence of paſſion; and diſcontent with the removal of reſtraints which are diſpleaſing, has ever found friends among thoſe, who are diſſatisfied with the exiſting order of things.

Liberty is a ſound dear to us all: But what do we underſtand by it? One, perhaps, denotes by it, a licenſe to do what he pleaſes, and con-

ſiders every kind and degree of reſtraint, as tyranny, whether that reſtraint originates with the individual himſelf, or is impoſed by civil rulers. Self-government, as commanded by chriſtianity, is viewed as a counteraction of natural freedom, and civil government as an intruſion on natural rights, equally odious. It is the perfection of Rouſſeau's celebrated ſyſtem, entitled the Social Contract, that "every perſon while united with all, ſhall obey only himſelf, and remain as free, as before the union." Such a liberty as this muſt be pronounced, in the higheſt degree, detrimental to the intereſts of mankind. It reduces man back to the very ſtate of barbariſm, from which government is ſuppoſed to have redeemed him. Liberty, if conſidered as a bleſſing, muſt be taken in a qualified ſenſe. The freedom which it implies, muſt be a limited, not abſolute freedom; unleſs we will pronounce government itſelf a curſe; for the very idea of government always ſuppoſes ſome reſtraint. But to this reſtraint the perverſity of man's nature has ever been oppoſed, and vicious men have ever been moſt loud in exclaiming in favor of unbounded liberty; becauſe ſuch a liberty is no other than the liberty of ſinning, the liberty of indulging lawleſs paſſion, and of invading a neighbor's rights. It would arm the idle and profligate againſt the virtuous and induſtrious,

and inſtead of a rational liberty, would be ſeen and felt to be, the worſt of tyrannies ; no better than a ſtate of nature, and deſtitute of the leaſt ſecurity for life or property. Let any one point out, if he can, an inſtance in the hiſtory of the world, where the human race have arrived to any tolerable degree of perfection or happineſs, in a ſtate of this kind. It cannot be done. Let ſpeculative men then ceaſe to extol the ſtate of nature, and to be in love with the life of ſavages. To reſtrain ſuch an abſurd liberty, government was inſtituted. Reſtraint, in ſome degree or other, is its very object : And to exclaim in favor of liberty as wholly oppoſite to reſtraint, is to oppoſe the very end for which government itſelf is inſtituted. Reſtraint then muſt be allowed to be neceſſary. The only queſtion is, of what ſort it ſhall be ? Now, altho' there are various forms of government ; they may all be reſolved into two kinds. One kind is ſupported by force : The other is dependant on opinion. The firſt is adapted to the worſt view of human nature. It conſiders man, as corrupt, and is prepared to encounter his vices. Fear is the great principle which it addreſſes. Partaking, generally, of the monarchical form, it is ſimple in its ſtructure, and eaſily organized. The greater part of the governments of the world have been

of this ſort. Originating immediately from the vices of men, it too often operates to continue thoſe vices. The evils of it are, an oppoſition of intereſts between rulers and ruled, and the tyrannical oppreſſion and extortion which always follow. Various circumſtances modify this kind of government. The government of Turkey is different from that of China, and that of Pruſſia different from either. The eſſential principles of each, however, are the ſame. The evils of this ſyſtem have made the friends of mankind wiſh for a better ſyſtem, in which the happineſs of ſociety ſhould be primarily conſulted, and not the aggrandizement of rulers; in which rulers ſhould impoſe no reſtraints, but ſuch as are neceſſary, and the ruled ſhould willingly ſubmit to them. If no burdens were impoſed, but neceſſary ones, they could not, with any propriety, be deemed oppreſſive. Mankind, being unwilling to make themſelves unhappy, might, it has been thought, be freely entruſted with the power of governing themſelves. Though, in this caſe, no abſolute ſecurity could be afforded for wiſdom in the people; ſtill, a degree of it would be expected, in their judgment concerning their own intereſts. In a pure democracy, the people, as a body, act. But this muſt ever be impoſſible, but in a very ſmall State. To extend a free gov-

ernment farther, the repreſentative ſyſtem has, in modern ages, been adopted. But whatever be the form, the people are ſuppoſed the ſource of power, and to have a conſtant check, or controul over rulers. The eſſential principle of ſuch a government is, that the people are willing to be controlled by reaſon, and to ſubmit to all neceſſary reſtraints and burdens, without the compulſion of force. Such a ſyſtem is dependant altogether on opinion; and as ſoon as there is not ſuch a willingneſs, as ſoon as it becomes neceſſary to depend on force, as in deſpotic countries, the ſyſtem is overthrown.

Can ſuch a government exiſt for any length of time? Some have thought not. It has been pronounced utopian; and it is ſaid, that in few countries, has this ſort of government flouriſhed. It is ſaid, that no ſuch government will ſtand; becauſe it is calculated on a wrong view of human nature: That it ſuppoſes a degree of knowledge, a moral character and moral habits which, ordinarily, are not found: That to underſtand the buſineſs of government thoroughly, requires a degree of ſkill, of which, the people, generally are not poſſeſſed: That, as a body, they know not enough to be able to judge of public meaſures: That even tho' they did, ſtill, a diſpoſition to acquieſce always in what is rea-

ſonable would be wanting. Knowledge alone, it is ſaid, is not ſufficient: That the people muſt be not only enlightened, but diſpoſed to obey: That as long as the nature of man continues as it is, there will be no ſecurity for the general prevalence of ſuch a diſpoſition: That in all countries, ſuch a ſyſtem muſt be alike impracticable for any length of time: That the eſſential qualities of human nature being the ſame, the ſame obſtacles will be every where preſented. The great enemies of ſuch a ſyſtem, it is ſaid, are the vices of men: That as long as human paſſions exiſt, they will have their operation, and be the fruitful ſources of contention, turbulence, and diſcontent: That demagogues will ariſe, who will deceive the people for the ſake of exalting their own conſequence: That ambition in aſpiring individuals, and the love of power, which is inherent in man, tend to engender faction: That rival towns or ſtates, actuated by jealouſy, will ſet themſelves in oppoſition to each other, as they find their intereſts to diſagree: That there is no abſolute ſecurity for wiſdom in the people: That they can never, for any conſiderable time, be brought, willingly, to ſubmit even to wholeſome reſtraints: That, thirſting for novelty, they will ever be given to change, and conſider the laws which they themſelves have made, as eaſily unmade: That notwithſtanding what is

ſaid about the diffuſion of information, ſtill, the people will eaſily ſuffer themſelves to be duped and blinded by the crafty and deſigning: That truth will be perverted, and the channels of information obſtructed; That heat, paſſion, and prejudice, will drown the ſtill voice of reaſon, and public offices be the purchaſe of venality, or the ſport of faction.

Some have had a totally different view of human nature. If men, as they ſuppoſe, are naturally inclined to do what is right, without being compelled to it; if they are inclined, on all occaſions, to reſpect the rights of others, to do juſtice, and yield all due ſubmiſſion and obedience to proper reſtraints and wholeſome laws, what ſhould prevent the republican ſyſtem from being carried into effect? Information, according to their opinion, is the only thing wanted among the people. Let it only be known what is right and neceſſary, and it will, at once, be acquieſced in: Whatever is for the public intereſt will be favoured, and all the evils, under which mankind have laboured, will, with juſtice, be aſcribed to corrupt governments as their cauſe.

But I muſt acknowledge, that to me, human nature appears different from what is here repreſented; whether we obtain our knowledge of it from ſcripture, civil hiſtory, or obſervation.—

Selfiſhneſs has ever been a prominent trait in the character of mankind; which will make men conſult their own private good at the expenſe of others. Man is always prone to what will centre in himſelf only; hating reſtraint of any ſort, and conſidering it, of itſelf, as an evil; aſpiring at domination over others; fond of poſſeſſing power, and prone to abuſe it. Human nature appears in its true colours, without artificial diſguiſe, in children. It is, in general, very hard to make children ſubmit to what is proper. They are ſelf-willed and extremely apt to rebel. What children are, in a family, mankind are, as ſubject to the reſtraints of law and order.

But muſt we then deſpair of the human race, and ſit down with the melancholy concluſion, that no improvements can ever take place in the political ſtate of the world? The moſt remarkable inſtance of popular governments, which have ſecured freedom to the people, while they have been allowed a control over it, is to be found in our own country. Mankind have been aſtoniſhed at beholding free ſyſtems of government prevailing here, while they have flouriſhed ſo badly in all former ages, and in all other parts of the world. If the before-mentioned objections to the practicability of the republican ſyſtem do not apply here, this muſt be owing to ſome peculiar circumſtances.

It has been obſerved, that government always ſupppoſes reſtraint on the paſſions of individuals. If mankind can be placed in ſuch a ſituation, that this reſtraint ſhall be impoſed from any other cauſe, there will be little need of much ſeverity on the part of government: There will be little need of force, or fear, to awe men to ſubmiſſion. Human nature, though radically the ſame in different countries, may ſtill be variouſly modified; and the character which man has ſuſtained, may be greatly altered, by placing him in a new and different ſituation, and allowing free ſcope to all the means neceſſary for effecting a change.—Whatever of this kind has been peculiar here; whatever there is, which has fitted us for a free government, muſt be ſought for in the genius and habits of the people, and in the circumſtances attending the firſt ſettlement of the country.

The ſtate of ſociety in Europe, and the governments eſtabliſhed there, originated from the feudal ſyſtem, and the genius of European inſtitutions cannot be underſtood, without a recurrence to that ſyſtem. The circumſtances attending the ſettlement of this country, were, in like manner, altogether peculiar, and gave riſe to a peculiar ſtate of ſociety. The object of our anceſtors was different from what uſually influences men, in ſettling a new country: It was, to

worſhip God, agreeably to the dictates of their own conſciences. Though they fled from unrighteous oppreſſion, they did not bring with them an abhorrence of thoſe ſalutary reſtraints, which are neceſſary in all countries. They acquieſced in civil government, as ordained of God, and were firm ſupporters of law and order. They reverenced the Deity, and framed their lives on Chriſtian principles. They made miſtakes, it is true, on the ſubject of religious toletion; but their errors were thoſe of the age in which they lived. The Bible they revered, and endeavored to enact their laws in accordance with it. Patriotiſm warmed their hearts and ſtimulated them to aim at the public good.—Where will you find legiſlators, laying a better foundation for the greatneſs and happineſs of a nation? Where will you find men, actuated by a more ſincere regard to poſterity, and poſſeſſed of a more ardent deſire to tranſmit to them, undiminiſhed, the bleſſings they enjoyed? They poſſeſſed ſober, induſtrious habits, and were ſtrangers to the temptations of luxury. In their manners, they were diſtingiſhed for ſimplicity, and in ſpeaking their ſentiments, they had no artificial diſguiſe. They revered truth and deteſted hypocriſy. Averſe to ceremony in public worſhip, they had, while in England, been reproachfully ſtyled Puritans by their adverſaries.

But this name of reproach they accounted their higheſt honor. The friends of freedom in the country from which they emigrated, the hiſtorian* has not failed to do them and their anceſtors merited honor, in aſcribing to them the freedom which is to be found in the Britiſh conſtitution. Their manners, their habits, and their employments fitted them for the republican ſyſtem of government.

It cannot be denied, that the inſtitutions which they eſtabliſhed, have had great influence, in producing that moral reſtraint of reaſon and opinion, which is grounded on religion and knowledge. The influence of the firſt was ſecured by the erection of houſes for public worſhip, and the prevalence of the laſt, by the early eſtabliſhment of ſchools and colleges. By theſe and other means, a ſtate of ſociety has been produced altogether peculiar, different from what has been known in Europe, and ſuperior to what is often known in any part of the world.

Our preſent enjoyment of civil and religious liberty reſults from the wiſe inſtitutions eſtabliſhed by our anceſtors. Even when colonies, our governments were free, and our preſent ſyſtems are but a continuation of them. The kind of government has grown out of our circumſtances, and its ſucceſs and permanency ſhow how well it

* *Hume.*

is fitted for our peculiar ſituation. The ſtate of ſociety naturally admitted a free government: No other would have been conſonant with the manners, ſentiments, and character of the people.

Now, it is evident that the more virtuous a people are, the leſs need is there of the reſtraints of civil government, to promote order. Our country, we have ſeen, admits of our enjoying a mild and free government. The important enquiry is, to what this is owing? Is it owing to this, which ſome have contended, that man needs no reſtraint; but will, unleſs made vicious by government, always act as a reaſonable being, and be obedient and virtuous, becauſe it is his higheſt intereſt to be ſo? This is a theoretical idea, which has no foundation in fact. It proceeds from a totally wrong view of human nature, and is fraught with miſchief to ſociety. If man is here formed a good citizen, it is not becauſe he needs no reſtraint; but becauſe, from his youth, he has been taught to reſtrain thoſe paſſions, which it is the principal buſineſs of law and government to reſtrain. This reſtraint is begun in the family. Children are early inured to family government, and are taught habits of ſubordination and reſpect. In the ſchool, the ſame ſyſtem is continued, while the ſeeds of knowledge and virtue are ſown in the youthful mind. Higher ſeminaries of learning alſo, accord

with the ſame ſyſtem, as do the inſtructions of the bible and the deſk. Man, from the cradle to the grave, is conſtantly learning new leſſons of moral inſtruction, and is trained to virtue and order by perpetual and ſalutary reſtraints. To all which may be added the reſtraint of public opinion, which, in a country where chriſtianity is believed, compels even profligates to be outwardly virtuous. Habits and inſtitutions, like theſe, tho' by many deemed unworthy of notice, and underrated, as ſubordinate means of ſecuring virtue and order, are here found to poſſeſs diſtinguiſhed efficacy. Influencing reaſon and opinion, they operate more ſilently, but far more powerfully than force, or fear. Like the great law of gravity, in the natural world, they tend to the preſervation of univerſal harmony and order in ſociety. They govern man far more effectually, than the moſt cruel codes of penal laws. When they have produced their effect, and taught man the courſe of conduct which he ought to purſue, little is left for the magiſtrate: The buſineſs of government is already anticipated.

From the moral culture of the heart, is derived the chief force of moral obligation, and of courſe, the chief ſupport of human laws. Thence proceed all the endearing ties of gratitude and love, which unite man to man, in the diſcharge

of reciprocal duties, and which unite man to his Maker, in the diſcharge of the more ſolemn duties of piety. To be ſatisfied of the importance of theſe truths, we feel under no neceſſity of going abroad for light and information; for few can be found, who will not bluſh to deny them, in a country like this, where a conſtant experience of their benefits has produced a general conviction of their truth.

Property, in this country, is pretty equally divided among the people, and the principles of a juſt and equal diſtribution are recognized and eſtabliſhed by the laws, which regulate the deſcent of eſtates. An ocean of three thouſand miles has ſeparated us from the vices of an old and corrupt world. With a ſoil, not ſo ſpontaneouſly productive as to encourage idleneſs, but ſufficiently fertile to repay the annual loan of induſtry, the innocent employments of an agricultural life have bleſſed us with health and happineſs.

The feudal diſtinctions of tenant and lord are here unknown. In moſt European countries, the dependance of the peaſants on the rich, produces, on the one ſide, idleneſs and pride, and on the other, depreſſion and humiliating debaſement. The dependance of our citizens is only on each other, for the ſupply of mutual wants; which produces mutual confidence and good-will in the interchange of kind offices. Men, reſpect-

able for knowledge and worth, without the pride generally attached to their character in other countries, can here freely associate with their less informed fellow-citizens, for diffusing among them useful information. It is the false pride of ignorance, which always elates empty minds; but, in them, good sense carries with itself the antidote to arrogance and vanity. The traveller, reposing confidence in the moral habits of the people, feels himself safe from lawless assaults, and in every village that he enters, meets with the marks of civility and cordial welcome, from the cheerful sons of toil.

Facts of this kind are open to the observation of all, and cannot but be peculiarly interesting to Americans. The astonishing effects of our institutions strike foreigners with surprise, while we, who experience their benefits, are apt to be insensible of their importance.

At no period, was it ever more necessary, that this importance should be understood and felt, than at present. A general attention to the subject of politics, both at home and abroad, has led to the discovery of moral theories, concerning the means of producing national and individual happiness, which, while they come to us, not recommended by the sanction of experience, do, at the same time, strike at the root of our own systems. Principles in their nature visionary, have been

held out by ſpeculative men, as improvements upon our own ſyſtems, and are already faſt gaining ground in popular eſtimation. A wild way of thinking has ariſen, in connexion with events which have recently happened in the world: New ideas on political ſubjects have been adopted by men of ſpeculative minds, tending to annihilate all that is practical in virtue, and to ſubſtitute, in the room, the boldneſs of unauthoriſed conjecture. It muſt be allowed by all, that it is of importance, that we ſhould underſtand the true genius and ſpirit of our inſtitutions, and their effects on the ſtate of ſociety, leſt, in an age of innovation, we make ſhipwreck of our political happineſs, by venturing on the uncertainty of untried hypotheſis. This is the more neceſſary at a period, when, by an application of our principles of civil liberty to European nations, in a different ſtate of ſociety, miſtakes concerning their nature have unavoidably happened. Thoſe who have become converts to liberty, after having recently ſmarted under the laſh of tyranny, like the firſt converts to chriſtianity, who paſſed as ſuddenly from the ſuperſtitious darkneſs of heatheniſm, could not fail, influenced by feeling rather than reaſon, to miſtake the nature and application of principles, adopted with precipitancy and paſſion, before opportunity was afforded to ſtudy them, with coolneſs and care, or to trace their extenſive and important effects on ſociety.

It has been the wiſh of benevolent minds, that the principles of our liberty might be univerſally adopted: And as mankind eaſily believe what they wiſh to be true, without waiting to enquire, whether liberty can be any bleſſing to thoſe who have not habituated themſelves to that moral reſtraint which is a neceſſary ſubſtitute for force, the concluſion has been reſted in, as certain, that other nations in a totally different ſituation, could, as eaſily as ourſelves, enjoy what we enjoy, without that previous diſcipline in the ſchool of virtue, which has laid the foundation of our peculiar ſtate of ſociety. Benevolent men, pleaſed at beholding this country enjoying rational freedom, but failing to notice that peculiar ſtate of ſociety on which it is grounded, with a well-intentioned but ill-timed zeal, have haſtened to make the experiment of giving liberty, like ours, to nations unprepared to receive it: And they have fallen victims to their precipitancy. Ambitious men, treading in their ſteps, taking advantage of popular paſſion and revolutionary phrenzy, anxious to acquire, by diſorganizing, a diſtinction which they never would acquire by merit, and to attain a promotion to which they never could have aſpired by keeping to the line of duty and honor, and madly eſtimating their importance by the confuſion which they ſpread, proceeded on to level, with blind violence, the diſtinctions of virtue, to overthrow the wiſdom

of ages, and to fill the world with wretchedneſs and ruin.

THESE ſcenes are now paſt, and Americans, it is to be hoped, will learn from them, a profitable leſſon. It is plain that our political happineſs is valuable, only, in proportion to the ſecurity of its continuance. If this ſecurity depends on the preſervation of our civil and religious inſtitutions, it follows that the means, by which this can be effected, highly merit our attention. Manly and vigorous reſolution duly exerted, in enquiries concerning their nature and influence, will lead to ſuch a knowledge of their importance, as will make it impoſſible to overlook, or neglect them: While ignorance and ſloth, joined with knavery and cunning, by blinding us to their real value, cannot fail to induce us to withhold the attention, neceſſary for their preſervation, and thus precipitate our national ruin. In a ſituation like ours, no endeavours of falſe and deſigning men will be wanting, to warp and ſeduce us from our principles. What they cannot effect, by the force of ridicule, or the blandiſhments of perſuaſion and flattery, they will endeavor to accompliſh by ſophiſtry and intrigue.

THAT we may be guarded againſt the dangers of innovation, let us be cautious, in what manner we apply ourſelves to the ſtudy of politics. On

this, as on other ſubjects, common ſenſe will ever be our beſt guide. This moſt uſeful faculty always proceeds, by ſlow ſteps and clear deductions from known principles. Carefully conſulting facts, it admits no concluſions, as certain, which are not warranted by them. Safe from the faſcination of ſound, it looks only at things. Experience is its only guide, in examining or adopting.

In private life, it often requires much ſkill and experience, to hit upon the proper means of accompliſhing any good. Theſe qualities are ſtill more neceſſary, in ſearching for the means of national happineſs. Practical rules, in all ſituations, are ſafe; becauſe tried. Theory is novel, and therefore, dangerous. Whenever it is reſorted to, it is the ſource of innumerable errors.

In common life, the projector, who idly waſtes his time and eſtate, by venturing on theoretical plans, which promiſe no certainty, is, by all, laughed at and pitied. In political matters, where the lives and happineſs of millions are at ſtake, ſuch trifling ought to excite other feelings than thoſe of pity. The ſpeculatiſt in his cloſet, may not feel the evils, which flow from the ill ſucceſs of his plans; but to the great body of mankind, on whom the ſuffering devolves, they are too ſerious, not to turn to ſadneſs the wan-

tonneſs of ſport, and touch with remorſe even the heart of adamant.

It is only by proceeding in the courſe of experiment, that advances have ever been made in real knowledge. It was by diſcarding theory, and by philoſophiſing upon the principles of common ſenſe, that Bacon and Newton were led to the vaſt improvements which they made in natural philoſphy: And it has been by adhering to common ſenſe, that, in a few years, we have been able to know more of the true nature of government, than we could have learned by ſtudying for ages, all the abſurd declamations of all the theoretical politicians that ever exiſted.

It ſhuns with equal care, the errors of prejudice and the flights of enthuſiaſm. Are we required to diveſt ourſelves of all prejudice and paſſion, when about to inveſtigate truth in other ſciences, and ſhall we wrap ourſelves up completely in them, when about to apply to the ſtudy of politics? The ſcience is intereſting to the happineſs of our ſpecies, and ought therefore to be ſtudied with a candor, proportionate to its importance. Prejudice is a ſandy foundation, on which no ſyſtem can be ſtable or laſting.—Warmth of paſſion is apt to warp the mind from truth, and lead it aſtray into the bewildering

paths of error. The republicaniſm of our countrymen, if it have no other foundation than this, is mere ſound. It may animate the ſoldier in battle; but can do little towards informing his mind, or guiding his conduct, as a citizen.

Prejudice and enthuſiaſm have ever proved wretched guides, which lead, only to bewilder, and govern, only to deſtroy: They are equally uſeleſs in their influence, and tranſient in their being. When the events which called them forth, have ceaſed to impreſs the mind with their novelty, they die; and with them, the opinions which they created, and the ſpirit which they inſpired. But it is far otherwiſe with the evils, which they occaſion. They inflict wounds, not in the power of time itſelf to heal, and embitter the cup of life to millions of the human race.

The preſervation of our inſtitutions, and the influence which they ſhall have, depend much on the character of thoſe, who are to direct our national affairs. Human nature is ſo conſtituted, that the ſentiments and conduct of one part of ſociety are always, in ſome degree, under the influence of the other. This ever muſt be the caſe, while the endowments of the mind and the advantages for improving them continue, as at preſent, infinitely various. If good men only, could be influential, virtue and order might, in

them, uniformly meet with powerful ſupport. But while the world is ſufficiently vicious, to allow influence to men of groſs immorality, ſuch men will ever be directing their endeavors to increaſe the ſtock of vice, by aſſimilating others to themſelves.

POLITICAL promotion, in this country, depends on the ſuffrages of the people. It is for them to determine, on the one hand, the rewards which ſhall crown the virtuous; and on the other, the ſucceſs which ſhall attend the vicious. Theſe rewards, we truſt, will be rightly beſtowed, if the people properly feel reſpect for the man, who unites goodneſs with greatneſs, and at the ſame time, deteſt the villain, the evils of whoſe villainy are increaſed by the very abilities which he poſſeſſes: If they properly feel, how much permanent good will accrue to our country from the patriotic labors of the one, and how much miſery cannot fail to be entailed on it, by the plots and vices of the other.

WITH theſe views, let us for a moment, contraſt ſome of the prominent features of their reſpective characters.

THE love of his country is, in the good man, the ruling principle, and the public good is the pole-ſtar, which guides his conduct, in the tur-

bulent ocean of political life. His firmneſs in ſupport of a cauſe, which he deems a right one, fear cannot weaken : His reſolution danger cannot ſhake. Aiming ſteadily at the public welfare, he is diſcouraged by no difficulty and retarded by no obſtacle. Oppoſition only ſtimulates his powers and invigorates his exertions. As the fabled Phœnix riſes from its own aſhes, the fire of his ſoul is kindled, by attempts to extinguiſh it. With wiſdom to contrive, with ſtrength of arm to execute, difficulties ſerve but to encourage his zeal and add new energy to his determinations. Always conſiſtent in his political conduct, and ſteadily purſuing an uniform courſe, he commands the tribute of reſpect even from his enemies. Moral principle and inherent worth give him a commanding dignity, which overawes the licentious. His character reflects honor on himſelf and his country. To ſociety he is an ornament and a benefactor, and from his labors reſults more permanent benefit, than would accrue from the ſplendor of conqueſt, or the accumulation of national wealth.

But what ſhall we ſay of characters, in every thing, the reverſe ! men diſtinguiſhed for nothing, but baſeneſs, ſophiſtry, corruption, temporiſing and fickleneſs ; apparently influenced by no higher motives, than pride, ſelfiſhneſs, and

ambition. When the ſeductions of error and folly have led men to ſacrifice the principles of integrity to perſonal intereſt, and thro' motives of avarice or ambition, to counteract the honeſt convictions of their own minds; when temptation has led to deviate from the plain road of uprightneſs, the tranſition is eaſy and rapid into the by-paths of intrigue and baſeneſs. A crouching and fawning diſpoſition takes the place of manlineſs of manners and perſonal independence. Whatever charms a courſe of fair and open conduct may have before poſſeſſed, they have now loſt their influence. Too careleſs faithfully to examine, too uncandid impartially to judge, the mind becomes wholly diveſted of any reliſh for truth. Confounding thoſe obvious diſtinctions, which common ſenſe has ever been ſufficient to diſcover, and common honeſty to obſerve, it no longer diſcriminates real worth from meanneſs, and the true honor of purſuing noble ends, by means equally noble, from the baſeneſs of meanly flattering and temporiſing, to accompliſh diſhonorable ends, by means no leſs diſhonorable.

If to ſuch men our country is to look, for upholding its moſt eſſential intereſts, it were madneſs to flatter ourſelves, that we can long continue to enjoy them. Not only the happineſs, but

the dignity of our nation, which, with our own citizens, is to be the ground of attachment to their country and its government, and which is to claim from foreign nations the tribute of reſpect, muſt depend on the character of thoſe, who are to fill our offices of truſt and importance. But if on ſuch men we depend, we lean upon the ſtaff of a broken reed, which will ſurely pierce the hand which it ſupports.

It was not by ſuch men, that our preſent happy inſtitutions were planned and eſtabliſhed. It was not by ſuch men, the glorious revolution was accompliſhed, which gave us independence as a nation. Bad men, as they are unwilling to lend their aid to accompliſh things ſo noble, are equally unable to comprehend the greatneſs of ſoul and ſublimity of virtue, which inſpired the breaſts of thoſe, to whom, under Providence, we are indebted for their exiſtence. Under the influence of principles, which they contributed to eſtabliſh, we have erected a new empire, unknown to former times. The ſpirit of enterpriſe has given a highly elaſtic ſpring to the exertions of our citizens: Our commerce has been greatly extended and our wealth proportionably augmented.

Prosperity ſo unparallelled, has not failed to excite the envy and the jealouſy of other na-

tions, who found, that while they were exhauſting their reſources in unprofitable wars, we were reaping the fruits of peace. The mind dwells with pleaſure, on the picture of our proſperity, and with pain do we reflect, that any circumſtances of an unpropitious kind darken the proſpect of our glory. With pain are we forced to acknowledge, that it is the natural tendency of proſperity to corrupt the human heart.* But proſperity muſt be conſidered as a curſe rather than a bleſſing, when it proves the means of corrupting the purity of our national morals and of leading us to reject thoſe wiſe inſtitutions, eſtab-

* "OFTEN, while employed in writing these papers, have I wished for a warning voice of more power. The present moment, however auspicious to the United States, is critical: and, though apparently the end of all their dangers, may prove the time of their greatest danger. I have, indeed, since finishing this address, been mortified more than I can express by accounts which have led me to fear that I have carried my ideas of them too high, and deceived myself with visionary expectations. And should this be true—should the return of peace, and the pride of independence lead them to security and dissipation—should they lose those virtuous and simple manners by which alone republics can long subsist—should false refinement, luxury and impiety, spread among them; excessive jealousy distract their governments; and clashing interests, subject to no strong control, break the federal union: The consequence will be, that the fairest experiment, ever tried in human affairs, will miscarry; and that a revolution that had revived the hopes of good men, and promised an opening to better times, will become a discouragement to all future efforts in favor of liberty, and prove only an opening to a new scene of human degeneracy and misery."

Dr. Price's address to the inhabitants of the United States.

liſhed by our anceſtors. I have no heſitation in declaring, that whenever, from this or any other cauſe, there ſhall exiſt in the community, a relaxation of every religious and moral principle, together with a general licentiouſneſs of manners and chriſtianity ſhall here ceaſe to influence the minds of men, there will be an end to the republican ſyſtem of government. It is an all-important truth and cannot be too forcibly impreſſed on our minds, that chriſtianity is neceſſary to fit a nation for enjoying freedom. A government, like ours, cannot flouriſh, unleſs there exiſt among the citizens, a love of juſtice, benevolence, obedience and contentment. Suppoſe an individual deſtitute of theſe, and what does he become? Without juſtice, he is prompted to invade his neighbor's rights, to injure his good name, to diſturb his domeſtic peace and defraud him of his property. Without benevolence, he has no concern for others, no ſolicitude for his country's welfare. But wrapped up in indolent ſelf-enjoyment, and making himſelf the centre of all, he is fitted to be the ſlave of venality, or ſenſual appetite. Without obedience and contentment, he becomes turbulent, proud, and aſſuming. He has no diſpoſition to remain in that ſubordinate ſtate, which the good of ſociety requires; but ruſhing forward into the foremoſt ſtation, he proudly arrogates to himſelf the honors, belong-

ing to others, and diſturbs the peace and harmony of ſociety. We have now only to extend the idea farther and to imagine a nation compoſed of individuals univerſally of this character, and we are preſented with the picture of a people altogether unqualified for freedom. The Romans, when they became corrupt, notwithſtanding their boaſted love of liberty, tamely acquieſced in the government of Julius Cæſar, and in a more recent inſtance, a nation, not behind the Romans in pretenſions to freedom, have as quietly ſubmitted to an authority no leſs deſpotic. Let Americans open their eyes to the evidence which is before them, and derive wiſdom from the inſtructive leſſon which the example of other nations affords them. A corrupt people are fitted to be political ſlaves, and if we become vicious, to attempt to preſerve our liberties will be an abſurd and a fruitleſs taſk.

When we reflect on theſe things, and look on our own ſituation, we cannot but be deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of our danger. It cannot be denied, that immorality has, of late, very greatly increaſed, and that the principles and habits of our anceſtors are, by many, ridiculed and deſpiſed. Is there not a viſible contempt of chriſtianity? Has it not become faſhionable to reject the whole ſyſtem of revealed truth, as a

cunningly deviſed fable? Has not infidelity, inſtead of being confined to the higher circles, of late, pervaded the loweſt claſs? Theſe things are written as with a ſun-beam, and they muſt be worſe than blind who do not perceive them.

Ingratitude to God for the great things which he has done for us, is likewiſe too apparent to need any proof; as alſo, a ſpirit of diſcontent and wanton abuſe of the bleſſings conferred on us. The example of the Jewiſh nation is uſeful for our contemplation. Our land, like theirs, was originally ſettled for the purpoſes of religion, and the events in their hiſtory, are written for our inſtruction. The uneaſineſs and diſcontent which they manifeſted, God ſeverely puniſhed. Murmuring that they ſhould be under the divine government, and deſiring a king, that they might be like the nations around them, God gave them a king in his diſpleaſure. A people, ungrateful for a good government and virtuous rulers, deſerve to have the bleſſing taken away from them. Groundleſs murmurings have ever been the certain means of bringing down upon a people divine judgments, to puniſh them for their unthankfulneſs, and all their unworthy returns for divine goodneſs. Some may be diſpoſed to look no higher than to mere political cauſes, for the evils with which a nation may,

at any time, be viſited. But chriſtians will remember, that there is a governing Providence of God over nations, and whatever inſtruments are uſed, ſtill the divine hand is to be ultimately regarded.

It cannot be denied, that in our own country, there are ſome things which bear very evident marks of the diſpleaſure of the Almighty. I do not exaggerate. Every one's obſervation muſt have taught him, that our country, once peaceful and happy, is now rent with diviſions. The little cloud that aroſe, at firſt, like a man's hand, is ſpread over the horizon and portends evil.—What ſhall we ſay? "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? All power is of God. He putteth down one and ſetteth up another: He raiſeth up, as well as removeth, the mighty man, the judge, the prudent, and the counſellor." It is the ſame Being, that "turneth wiſe men backward, and ſendeth civil diſcord into kingdoms."

The anxious mind will be ſolicitous to know what is to be the iſſue of theſe things. We cannot look into futurity. Should we be a virtuous people, we may ſtill hope for the kind protection of that Almighty arm which has often been made bare in our defence. Good men have,

with pleaſure, indulged the idea of our arriving to great national happineſs and glory, and that this new and riſing empire would be built up and made to flouriſh, ſo long as the ſun and moon ſhould endure. But from preſent appearances, have we not reaſon to apprehend, that the ſolemn denunciation of the Moſt High comes addreſſed to us? "At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them." It is righteouſneſs alone that exalteth a nation, and it is only by returning to that piety, righteouſneſs and ſobriety which adorned and bleſſed the anceſtors of our nation, that we can hope to eſcape divine judgments and prevent the ruin, threatened to a ſinful people. If we truly reform, and put away thoſe evil doings which provoke the Lord to jealouſy, then may we expect that he will return to us in mercy, and rejoice over us, to bleſs us and to do us good. To encourage us in ſo doing, the Almighty has further given us theſe words of promiſe: "At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to deſtroy, if that nation, againſt which I have pronounced, turn from their evil ways, I alſo will repent of the evil, that I thought to do unto them." Let us

then, as a nation, accept the punishment of our iniquity, and return to the God of our fathers, from whom we have revolted. In this way only, can we expect that divisions will cease, and party spirit subside. In this way only, can we hope that he, who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, will give judgment to them who sit in judgment, and make us to be perfectly joined together, in the same mind and in the same judgment; causing our eyes to see our Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, none of whose cords shall be broken, neither any of the stakes thereof removed.

May we all repent, and do our first works, remembering that mercy, when despised, will be followed with judgment. Inattention to God and a continued abuse of his goodness will provoke him to empty us from vessel to vessel, and for the iniquities of our land, many will be the rulers thereof: Unstable as water, we shall not excel. But if we notice the Divine hand which has been lifted up against us, and turn unto God by repentance and works of righteousness; if we speak the truth one to another, and love as brethren, we may still hope, that God will be in the midst of us, and sit in the assembly of our rulers, that he will prosper the work of their hands, and make their administration productive

of the public good. God ſhall fill Zion with judgment and righteouſneſs, and wiſdom and knowledge ſhall be the ſtability of our times and ſtrength of ſalvation: And the fear of the Lord ſhall be our treaſure; and he ſhall lift us high among the nations.